

Community Assistantship Program

**Community Building on the
Edge of the Wilderness**

Prepared in partnership with
Edge of the Wilderness Community Center

Prepared by
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University of Minnesota
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CAP Report 122

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22 May 2007

Edge of the Wilderness Community Center
Box 303
Bigfork, MN 56628

Re: CAP Final Report

Dear Jeff Corn:

Our highly successful CAP project took place in Bigfork, MN during the last half of August 2006. Prior to that, Erinn Huntley, our graduate student researcher/instructor, made her first 250-mile trip up to the site to examine the facility, did her historical research of our area, consulted with her advisor, bought materials not available up north, and designed our back drop.

The drop is an 'ad' drop, so-called because authentic, historical drops of the beginning of the last century often featured a beautiful painting of the locale, painted draperies, and advertisements of businesses in the area. This drop will be featured as the front drop for the Bigfork Town Centennial Celebration in August of 2007.

The first day of the session, Erinn showed her portfolio to an ensembled group of community members (20 over 18 years of age, and 9 under). We talked about the plans for the residency, then we prepped the space (put down the plastic, then stapled the fabric, sprayed it with water to shrink it, etc). We also began mixing colors. Over the next several days, the crew began sketching in and painting on the 15' x 30' muslin drop. Erinn showed us how to make many of the tools necessary for drop painting, such as four foot-long brush and charcoal holders, "floggers" for erasing charcoal lines, measurement sticks, "pouncing" boards and charcoal bags for transferring of designs, and more.

The last couple of days we did the woodworking part of the project, the "flats" and platform-building sessions. This project brought in new people both to the project and to the Edge Center. We built four masonite-board-surfaced platforms (2 were 4' x 8' and two were 4' x 4') and six luan-faced flats (all 4' x 12').

That is a quite succinct description of what the work of the project entailed, but I will tell you the parts of the project that are still important to us.

First, during the summer of last year, over 30 different adults and more remarkably 24 young people came into the theatre to work on these projects. Over the ten days we worked together, 8 people came everyday, another 10 missed only one or two days, and of the over 50 people who worked, only 3 came only once! The crews were always mixed ages, mixed socio-economic groups, and veteran theatre workers with novices. The theatre became a small "c" community center.

Next, because of a good deal of advertising and word-of-mouth that encouraged "dropping in" to see the work, over 70 community members stopped by to view the progress. We kept records of workers and viewers. Each group or individual who came to visit met Erinn, got the synopsis of what had gone on earlier, were told HOW and FROM WHOM we got the grant, and then they stood and watched our wonderful teacher instruct and encourage her crews. We frequently had people climb the high ladder to look down and imagine what the drop would look like hung on the scenery pipes.

The play for which the drop was made has yet to be performed, but over the nine months since the session, the drop has been shown-off to every tour group that has visited the theatre and used for the local hospital's annual meeting (they have an ad on the drop).

The methods we were taught during the session have been used on all the plays since last August. Two local people have taken up the challenge of doing two new drops for the upcoming play. The school's art class has used techniques we learned on murals inside the school.

The flats and platforms have all been used, both by the community and the school.

I am sending some pictures of the work in progress and of the final result of the drop in its hanging position. If there is anything else that I can tell you about this project, the CAP experience, or working with Erinn Huntley, do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,
Patricia L. Feld, President
Edge of the Wilderness Community Center







Bigfork Valley
Hospital • Clinics • Communities



EDGE WILDER ARTS
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Big Bear Cola
Est. 1907

EdgeWild Players
Est. 1996

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Big Bear